

*Virginia Early Childhood Comprehensive
Systems Project*



VECCS Early Childhood State Plan 2005



*Virginia's Early Childhood Investment:
Creating a system for healthy, successful
children*

Virginia Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems State Plan

Significance

What children know and can do at the time they start school helps determine their educational and lifelong success. Research has shown that the period of early childhood represents a time of substantial brain development that has a significant impact on children's later emotional and intellectual development. Today's economy demands that children be prepared for their own futures through quality early care and education experiences. There are a number of significant environmental stressors and other negative risk factors that young children experience which influence the brain.

Nationally, it has been estimated that 25-40% of children are not ready to be successful in school. In Virginia, a number of critical challenges exist for families:

- 31% percent of births in Virginia are to single mothers
- 17 of every 1000 births are to mothers between the ages of 15-17
- 13% of children in Virginia live in poverty
- 0.2% of total general fund expenditures are allocated for early learning
- Annual per child state & federal investment for Birth-5 years is \$1,068, compared to the annual per child state & federal investment for school age of \$7,654
- 68% of women (253,000) and 85% of men (241,000) with children under age 6 are employed

Assuring that children experience an environment which fosters their early development requires strong family involvement. There are factors that support families and predict child success in school. These support factors include the parent's role in promoting early learning, quality early care and education experiences, parent-child attachment, prenatal and post-natal health, family economic security, and family psychosocial factors (depression, domestic violence). To best support families in each of these areas, local, state and community agencies must collaborate and provide integrated systems for providing early childhood services to children and their families.

Resource and monetary investment in the early years pays off. Research and scientific evidence supports the knowledge and understanding that learning begins at birth, nurturing makes a difference in a child's life, failure to start school ready is expensive, quality out of home care matters, and that many families have to work outside the home. School readiness is multidimensional, including components of physical and behavioral health, family support, parent education and early care and education.

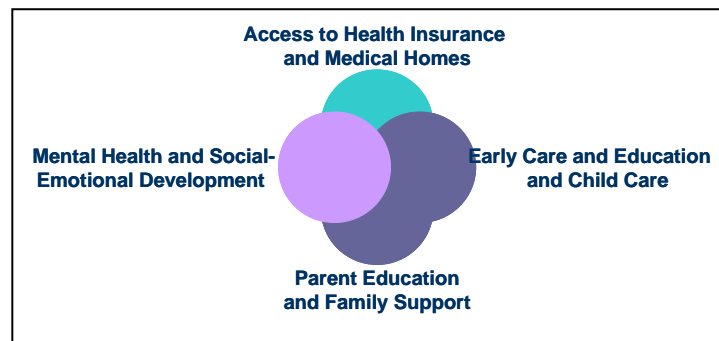
An integrated systems approach is important because of the scope and complexity of early childhood needs and issues, the number of jurisdictions and sectors involved in early childhood, and the number and range of factors that influence the development, organization, funding, delivery, and evaluation of services.

National Efforts: State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems

The federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) launched the State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (SECCS) Initiative in 2002 to enable state MCH/Title V Directors to collaborate with partner agencies and stakeholders in developing comprehensive early childhood service systems. The initiative is designed to help state MCH programs build strong leadership capacity and skills base to work effectively with multiple and diverse service systems. This will help programs to plan and implement a more family-centered, coordinated, prevention-oriented, and funded system of services to support the health and

development of young children birth to five years of age. There were five component areas that served as the foundation for the development of the state plan (Figure 1).

Figure 1



The outcome of the two-year planning process is to: 1) Support State Maternal and Child Health Agencies and their partner organizations in collaborative efforts to strengthen the State's early childhood system of services for young children and their families and 2) Develop and implement a state strategic plan that includes five grant component areas: medical home, behavioral health, parent education, family support, and early care and education. The implementation of a comprehensive early childhood system will promote the health and well being of young children, enabling them to enter school ready and able to learn.

Virginia's Efforts: Virginia Early Comprehensive Systems Grant

The Virginia Department of Health initiated a state strategic planning process in 2003 to develop a plan of action. Throughout 2004-2005, over 100 public and private partners met to create a vision for an early childhood integrated system for Virginia and identify system building efforts to promote healthy children and families ready to enter school. Figure 2 summarizes the planning efforts over the first 18 months of the planning grant.

Environmental Scan

As part of the Virginia Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (VECCS) grant, an environmental scan was conducted to identify the most pressing gaps and strengths in Virginia's early childhood system. The VECCS Environmental Scan and Evaluation Coordinator analyzed data from existing needs assessments, including the internal Title V Needs Assessment (completed May 2005), summaries of findings from facilitated workgroup discussions regarding specific gaps in each of the five core component areas (medical home, behavioral health and social-emotional development, early care and education, parent education and family support), and findings from a survey distributed to state agencies, non-profit organizations and faith based organizations, advocacy groups and private organizations.

The purpose of the environmental scan was to identify the areas in need of the most improvement in order to foster a successful early childhood system in Virginia. The scan was also used to inform Virginia's strategic plan in each of the five component areas, and later was cross-referenced to the workgroup plans to ensure that all gaps and areas in need of improvement were addressed. The following were identified as opportunities to be addressed in developing the plan:

- Support more family and parent involvement within system development efforts
- Ensure public and family engagement
- Support system building efforts within communities

- Support early care and education efforts for program quality and standards, access/availability
- Develop system oversight to maintain momentum moving towards an integrated system
- Develop a funder's initiative/committee to explore leveraging investments and building support for increased public investment.
- Promote data development and evaluation & a state network of early childhood evaluation

Figure 2



Moving From Planning to Implementation

A state-planning meeting was held October 2005 with key public and private partners to review the early childhood state plan developed by the work groups. After intensive review and discussion, the outcome was a series of recommendations for improving Virginia's service delivery to families of young children. The work groups developed detailed strategies and activities, incorporating evidence based research and practice, for service delivery for four goals: infrastructure, integrated systems of care, family and public engagement, and evaluation and finance.

Implementation: Emerging Priorities

Recommendations from the October 2005 state-planning meeting outlined priorities on which to focus resources. These will form the core of the first year of implementation of the state plan:

- Develop stronger leadership at both the state and community level using existing structures to lead and coordinate a system of integrated services focusing on issues facing families and young children in Virginia.
- Develop a public/private data center to provide a virtual warehouse for data and technical assistance to data consumers.
- Develop uniform performance measures across agencies to provide a more integrated service delivery approach and to evaluate progress.
- Work with communities to assist in developing or enhancing planning and delivering integrated services to young children and families.
- Market the importance of early learning and nurturing environments and supporting early childhood services.
- Coordinate a core group of committed early childhood leaders to explore funding streams for programs and services for families and young children as an investment for the future and school readiness.

Next Steps

Federal funding for this Maternal Child Health project continues for a three-year implementation period beginning October 2005. Next steps for VECCS include:

1. Secure leadership resources to provide oversight and continue the process of moving towards a single centralized early childhood state planning structures consisting of both public and private partners.
2. Continue the partnership and work with the Virginia Department of Social Services, Department of Education and other early childhood leadership groups on issues of early learning and education.
3. Partner with community agencies and organizations to seek their buy-in and assistance with state and community efforts to improve early learning and nurturing environments and supporting early childhood services.
4. Build on existing community coalitions' successes to develop a tool kit for communities to assist them in developing or enhancing planning and delivering integrated services to young children and families.
5. Educate and engage the public about the benefits of supporting an early childhood system.
6. Identify and coordinate resources to support efforts to implement the plan.

Virginia Early Childhood State Strategic Plan

What follows is an abbreviated version of the early childhood state plan. It outlines the goals, objectives and strategies developed by the work groups throughout the planning period. The longer version of the plan contains detailed strategies and recommended activities.

The plan is framed by the four goals of infrastructure, integrated systems of care, family and public engagement, and evaluation and finance. It is ordered by priority.

Virginia Early Childhood State Plan Goals

- GOAL 1:** Virginia has the capacity to provide a comprehensive, consumer oriented system of information, support, prevention, and intervention services to families and children birth to age five.
- GOAL 2:** A coordinated method of delivering a full spectrum of easily accessible services needed by children and families is developed in all communities and supported by state agencies.
- GOAL 3:** Families and the public have knowledge, understanding and the opportunity for direct involvement in all levels of the early childhood system.
- GOAL 4:** The early childhood system is sustainable, has flexible financing and resources, is standards driven, and uses quality indicators to measure progress.

Vision and Mission

VISION:

Virginia's Early Childhood Investment: Creating a system for healthy, successful children.

MISSION:

Implement a comprehensive early childhood system that promotes the health and well being of young children, enabling them to enter school ready and able to learn.

INFRASTRUCTURE

GOAL 1:

Virginia has the capacity to provide a comprehensive, consumer oriented system of information, support, prevention, and intervention services to families and children birth to age five.

Rationale:

A successful and comprehensive early childhood system begins with the availability of comprehensive programs and services. The key areas of importance identified in Virginia during the strategic planning process are: system capacity of quality providers and services, state and community policies that support the early childhood system and leadership committed to moving the early childhood system forward. These services should be based on best practices, culturally competent, affordable and family-driven. Although financing is a critical component of a successful infrastructure, it was placed with evaluation to form another outcome. This separate category was formed because of the strong association between evaluation, data and financing, and because these two areas were found to be large gaps in the development of an early childhood system in Virginia.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES:

1. The Early Childhood System is supported by effective policies and leadership.

- Develop policies that require screening for healthy social-emotional development of all children.
- Align public and private health insurance to provide comprehensive coverage.
- Provide state level leadership to drive the initiative in early care and education.
- Support policies and licensing regulations that promote the health and safety of children in early care and education programs.

2. Training and professional development is encouraged for providers working with children 0-5 and their families.

- Create statewide networking and communication linkages among parent among education programs.
- Train primary care providers as well as other professionals to promote routine screening for healthy social-emotional development using readily available high quality instruments.
- Develop and implement a professional development system for early care and education based on best practices.

3. The supply of trained, qualified, accessible providers is adequate to meet needs.

- Support and sustain adequate distribution and number of:
 - healthcare providers across the state with particular emphasis on oral and behavioral health providers.
 - early care and education providers trained in age and stage appropriate care, particularly for children with special needs.

4. The supply of a full spectrum of affordable, quality, culturally appropriate services is adequate to meet needs.

- Advocate for culturally appropriate care and services for all families.
- Promote implementation of medical home models of care in all pediatric practices.
- Promote the implementation of model oral health programs.
- Enhance the ability of parent education programs to address the needs of diverse cultures and family structures.
- Increase the number of slots allocated by early care and education settings for babies, toddlers, preschoolers and children with special needs.

INTEGRATED SYSTEM OF CARE

GOAL 2:

A coordinated method of delivering a full spectrum of easily accessible services needed by children and families is developed in all communities and supported by state agencies.

Rationale:

An effective early childhood system must include communities that are knowledgeable about their specific needs, and coordinated and integrated community networks, services, programs and providers. It is also critical to have these networks and subsystems communicating and working collaboratively at the state and community level. These relationships will result in a more efficient delivery of services as well as help reduce barriers and provide seamless services that are easily accessible and easy to navigate for Virginia's families.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES:

- 1. Community and state programs and agencies collaborate with families to integrate services across and within each component (medical home, behavioral health and social-emotional development, early care and education, parent education, family support) of an early childhood system.**
 - Coordinate parent education programs with early care and education programs and other education programs across the state.
 - Educate child care providers on how to identify problems in behavioral health and social-emotional development.
 - Establish an interagency team led system of care within each community that includes behavioral health as a focus.
 - Coordinate the provision of parenting education services provided by multiple agencies.
 - Enhance ability of all providers coming in contact with children ages 0-5 and their families to begin screening and education for behavioral health risk factors as early as possible, beginning prenatally.
 - Increase the capacity of communities or local coalitions to assist family, friend and neighbor care to strengthen their capacity to provide quality early care and education experiences.
 - Promote health and school readiness in all early care and education environments.
- 2. The system minimizes financial and other barriers to care and supports consumer-friendly services that are accessible through multiple points of entry to all families.**
 - Deliver more high-quality parent education programs that are accessible in underserved areas and populations.
 - Provide information and support services (including prevention and intervention) that are accessible to diverse family cultures and structures.
 - Create systems of community resources utilized by health care providers that are easily navigable and consumer-friendly.
 - Adopt policies and services that increase the affordability of quality health care and related costs.
 - Coordinate multiple agencies to streamline application processes and refer families for family support, behavioral health and healthcare services.
- 3. Providers are knowledgeable about the specific resources at the state and community levels and are able to effectively help families effectively navigate these resources.**
 - Create a central web-based depository for parent education information.
 - Educate providers about state and community resources and how to refer families appropriately.
 - Work together with all community stakeholders to identify existing early childhood resources and needs.
 - Increase the coordination of integrated systems of care and education for babies, toddlers and preschoolers by sharing information and enhancing linkages.

FAMILY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

GOAL 3:

Families of children birth to five and the public have knowledge, understanding and the opportunity for direct involvement in all levels of the early childhood system.

Rationale:

Direct involvement and engagement in an early childhood system begins with having an understanding of the purpose, value and cost benefit of having and using an early childhood system and its various components. Encouraging family participation, business and legislative support and informed decision making at all levels of the system, will lead to a sustainable early childhood system in Virginia.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES:

- 1. Families are aware of the importance of healthy early childhood development, are informed consumers of early childhood services, and advocate at the state and local level for quality early childhood services.**
 - Increase families' understanding and awareness of the importance of healthy social-emotional development, prevention and intervention efforts when necessary.
 - Encourage families to play a central role in shaping the parent education curriculum and its delivery.
 - Enhance families' capacity to select quality age and stage appropriate care and education programs and monitor their child's program.
 - Educate families about healthcare, education and support services and the importance of accessing them throughout life.
 - Increase the number and percent of eligible children that are enrolled in and utilize publicly funded health insurance services.
 - Involve families and communities at the local and state policy level.
- 2. The public, including businesses and communities, understand the benefits of supporting the early childhood system and are engaged in the implementation of the system.**
 - Inform business about the advantages of supporting family friendly policies.
 - Increase the number of businesses engaged in activities supporting early care and education and early childhood services.
 - Establish partnerships and initiatives among communities, businesses and providers to help promote early care and education and community support for quality early childhood services.
- 3. Legislators and policymakers are informed about issues facing children ages 0-5 and their families and have the knowledge to support a successful early childhood system.**
 - Inform state legislators about ways to support and promote family self-sufficiency.
 - Conduct education and training programs targeting all levels of government so that the importance of social-emotional development is understood.
 - Communicate the importance of parent education and family support to key decision makers.
 - Utilize family input in the development of policies and programs.

EVALUATION AND FINANCE

GOAL 4:

The early childhood system is sustainable, has flexible financing and resources, is standards driven, and uses quality indicators to measure progress.

Rationale:

The importance of outcome data and evaluation of programs and their link to funding has never been stronger. It is critical that an early childhood system be able to demonstrate, with quality data and evaluation measures, the impact the system has on its intended outcomes, which are to ensure school readiness for children ages 0-5 in Virginia. An early childhood system that is accountable must monitor the outcomes and cost-benefit of these services it delivers and use this information when making policy and funding decisions. This outcome focuses on the collection of minimal, meaningful data points that are readily available but which are reliable and predictive of the success of the system. This outcome also focuses on identifying and understanding current financing and maximizing current resources.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES:

1. Program evaluation and development is achieved using standardized definitions and quality data and performance measures.

- Define and standardize quality data outcomes.
- Measure family satisfaction with the early care and health care system.
- Incorporate needs assessment findings in planning.
- Define quality for all early childhood services.
- Monitor and evaluate early childhood programs and services.
- Standardize definitions of behavioral health terminology.

2. Funding supports the early childhood system at both the state and community level.

- Increase funding to communities.
- Support parent education programs with adequate funding.
- Allow providers to bill for time spent delivering a medical home.
- Focus on families most at risk.

3. Existing financial resources are maximized.

- Understand and utilize existing funding sources most efficiently and effectively.
- Identify new funding streams, to fill gaps in existing financial system.
- Integrate funding streams for maximum effect.

Acknowledgements

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Anthem
Care Connection for Children
Central Virginia Health Planning Agency
Child Development Resources
Children's Hospital of Richmond
Children's Museum of Richmond

(CHIP) Children's Health Involving Parents of Virginia
Commonwealth Parenting Center
Community Service Boards
Covering Kids and Families
Early Head Start
Fairfax County Office for Children
Free Clinic Associations
Governor's Office for Substance Abuse Prevention
Greater CHIP of Richmond
Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce
Greater Richmond SCAN
Growing Up at Obici
Hanover County Public Schools

Head Start
Healthy Families Virginia

Medical Home Plus
National Child Care Information Center
Norfolk Public Schools
Office of the Secretary of Education
Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources
Parent Advocates
Partnership for People with Disabilities
Prevent Child Abuse Virginia*

*Read Aloud Virginia
Richmond Behavioral Health Authority
Richmond Partnership for Children
Single moms support group
Smart Smiles
Success by 6
Total Action Against Poverty
United Way

(VACAP) Virginia Community Action Partnership
VCU Child Development Center
Virginia Alliance for Child Care Associations
Virginia Child Care Resource & Referral Network
Virginia Child Daycare Council
Virginia Commission on Youth
Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Department of Education
Virginia Department of Health
Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice
Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services
Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation & Substance Abuse
Virginia Department of Social Services
Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
Virginia Health Care Foundation
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
Virginia Primary Care Association
Virginia Poverty Law Center
Virginia Treatment Center for Children

Voices for Virginia's Children
Wingspan LLC
Zero To Three*